



## Billie Travalini

### Established Professional, Fiction Wilmington

Through poetry and prose, Billie Travalini has used the tragedies in her own life to inspire others to heal the wounds of past abuses. Her book *Bloodsisters*, which tells of her childhood experiences with the State foster care system, was a winner of the Lewis and Clark Press Discovery Prize in literary nonfiction and a finalist for a Bakeless Literary Publication Prize and a James Jones First Novel Fellowship. Travalini teaches at Lincoln University and Wilmington College and works with youth at Delaware's youth detention centers and at the Girls & Boys Clubs. She is fiction editor of the *Journal of Caribbean Literatures* and is director of the writers' group Delaware Literary Connection. In June 2005, her article "Wholeness and the Short Story" was published in *Writers on Writing: Short Story Writers and Their Art*. A photographer as well as a writer, Travalini recently completed *The Wilmington Senior Center: 50 Years of Community*, a collection of photographs, stories and interviews.

*My stories are a way of giving voice to those who see themselves as voiceless: an old woman who married young and resents the uselessness of a life not lived; two sisters with a horrible family secret, sitting in a busy luncheonette, where their reaction to others offers insight into their own similarities and differences; ordinary people that need to know that their voices matter in the big scheme of things.*

*Literature is the best way we have to make sense of where we came from, where we are, and where we are heading. Great stories give witness to the strengths and vulnerabilities of individuals and the communities in which they live. As Toni Morrison shows so beautifully in *Sula*, the health of one feeds off the health of the other. Currently, I am writing a book of short stories for use in my work as an educational consultant for troubled youth. Young people need stories they can relate to, stories that use solid storytelling skills and the best literary techniques to "tell it like it is."*

In walks Kate with a short Twiggy haircut and a nervous smile. The last time I saw her I was on my way to the Children's Home. That was in August, nine months ago. Kate had just turned fourteen and had the best batting average in Wilmington High School, boy or girl. I was thirteen and skinny with a fever that landed in my joints like a slow-burning fire.

Today Kate is wearing a mini Madras dress with a matching ribbon around her head, and her freckles are gone. Only her smile is the same; it lingers even when she frowns, although almost nobody sees it except me.

I wave. The waitress gives me the evil eye that tells me I am holding up a lunch hour table and she doesn't like it one bit. I have seen her kind before, hair teased into a beehive and fingernails painted fire engine red; craters at the corners of her mouth from years of hard work and disappointment. I know I should feel sort of sorry for her since I don't want craters in my face when I get to be her age, which I guess at about forty. But I make a point to never feel sorry for mean people.

"Expecting someone?" she barks.

I answer by standing up and leaning across the table for a better view.

"Hey, miss," a voice calls, and the waitress hurries off. This suits me just fine because now I have a clear view of Kate standing in a long line near the counter.

I hold a napkin above my head. Kate smiles and walks toward me. I smile too, because I know that nobody can keep us apart. One time my father told a judge that I was a bad influence on Kate and I needed to be locked up, but the judge saw right through him.

"That's the last thing your daughter needs," he said, and ordered me to live at the Children's Home, a sort of orphanage. Only there most of the kids aren't orphans; their parents just don't want them. That's why they're sad looking, many in a lonely sort of way. But I don't like to talk about stuff like that because it's too ugly and talking doesn't change anything anyway.

Excerpt from the short story "Kozy Korner"  
by Billie Travalini

A number of Individual Artist Fellowship recipients from previous years will be leading workshops at the day-long New Castle Writers' Conference, April 14, co-sponsored by the Delaware Literary Connection and Wilmington College, on the college's New Castle campus. Featured speakers include nationally recognized writers Tom Coyne and Joan Mellen and poet Gerry La Femina, as well as Delaware poet laureate Fleda Brown. Current Fellowship recipient Billie Travalini will read from her latest fiction. Previous years' recipients involved in the conference include Cruce Stark, Ed Dee, Marisa de los Santos, and Lara Zeises. For more information call 764-0982, e-mail [btravalini@aol.com](mailto:btravalini@aol.com), or visit the Web site [wilmcoll.edu](http://wilmcoll.edu).

## 2007 Individual Artist Fellowship Honorable Mentions

**Gale Flynn**, Established Professional, Creative Nonfiction

**Heather Poultney**, Emerging Professional, Poetry

**David Schelat**, Established Professional, Music Composition

**Peter Campbell**, Emerging Professional, Solo Recital

**Thomas Del Porte**, Emerging Professional, Painting

**Pahl Hluchan**, Emerging Professional, Painting

**Gregg Morris**, Established Professional, Painting

**Norman Sasowsky**, Established Professional, Painting

**Nancy Breslin**, Established Professional, Photography

**Lori Crawford**, Established Professional, Works on Paper